



Kay Ivey
Governor



Graham L. Sisson, Jr.
Executive Director

State of Alabama Governor's Office on Disability FY 2019



It's All GOOD



The Honorable Kay Ivey Governor State of Alabama



KAY IVEY, GOVERNOR
STATE OF ALABAMA

The work contained in this annual report shows how the Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) is successfully helping the more than 550,000 people in Alabama living with a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). I rely on GOOD to provide reliable and helpful information on disability resources and the unmet needs of affected Alabamians. My administration is committed to increasing opportunities for people with disabilities in Alabama as well as increasing employment opportunities through the Governor's Job Fair for People with Disabilities.

GOOD is an excellent resource. If you need assistance with disability-related issues, please do not hesitate to contact the Governor's Office on Disability.



Letter from the Executive Director

I would like to thank the Governor and the Alabama Legislature for their continuing support of GOOD. Fiscal Year 2019 has been a year to celebrate the passage of an important piece of legislation supported by GOOD.

The **Volunteer Transportation Bill** (also referred to as the Good Samaritan Bill) **Act No. 2019-450** was sponsored in the House by Representative K. L. Brown. It was signed by Governor Kay Ivey on July 24, 2019. The following is a summary of the items covered in the Act:

- HB 138 grants Good Samaritan protection against liability for damages to volunteers providing transportation to a health care facility or health care provider in certain circumstances.
- HB 138 contains language that states if a person in good faith, and not for compensation, provides an individual transportation to a health care facility or health care provider, he or she will not be liable for any civil damages resulting from any action or omission in providing transportation, unless the act or omission was the result of the provider's willful or wanton misconduct.
- The transportation provider must post in a conspicuous place in his or her vehicle an explanation of the immunity provided.
- Acceptance of a gratuitous contribution to the transportation provider does not constitute a waiver of immunity.

Fiscal Year 2019 has been another year of positive growth and change for the office. GOOD continues to maintain nine local advisory committees around the state which provide grassroots input about unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities and increases the visibility of the office. GOOD partners with these local advisory groups to facilitate the GOOD mission statement and strategic plan and obtain information at the grassroots level. The GOOD website has been revised to be even more user-friendly and includes additional resources.

GOOD is available to do training, accessibility surveying, and speaking at meetings or seminars at no cost. To schedule training, speaking engagements, or surveying, call GOOD's Toll Free Number at 888-879-3582. Meetings continue to be held with other state agencies to foster collaboration and maximize state resources for people with disabilities. A special thanks is again given to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services for its close partnership with GOOD.

Information about disability issues and training continues to be disseminated throughout the state. Awareness is a powerful tool which leads to greater access for individuals with disabilities. GOOD continues its role of dispensing accurate information. Join the GOOD list by accessing the appropriate icon on GOOD's website at www.good.alabama.gov.

GOOD's Toll-Free Number is 888-879-3582 for consumers or anyone interested in information, referrals, and resources for people with disabilities in Alabama.

We look forward to the progression and inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr.



Table of Contents

The Honorable Governor Kay Ivey.....	2
Executive Director Letter	3
Staff, GOOD's 2019 Legislative Session Bill Signing.....	4
GOOD Overview & Strategic Plan	5
GOOD Fiscal / SMART Budget	6
Goals and Accomplishments	7, 8, & 9
UNA Establishes Dr. Graham Sisson DSS Champion Award.....	9

Staff

Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr., Executive Director

Graham was appointed as Executive Director of the Governor's Office on Disability in October 2007 and was reappointed in January 2011. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of North Alabama in Accounting in 1987. Graham also attended Vanderbilt University and was awarded his Juris Doctorate in 1990. He was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 1990. He received a certificate in Rehabilitation Leadership and Management from Auburn University in May, 2009. Graham served as an adjunct law professor teaching a disability law course at the Birmingham School of Law and taught a doctoral course in disability law and history at Auburn University. Graham is a 2016 graduate of Auburn University with a PhD in Rehabilitation, Counseling, and Leadership. He has lived with a disability since 1982.

Marlene Word, Deputy Director

Marlene was appointed as Executive Assistant of the Governor's Office on Disability in July 2013 and was appointed as Deputy Director in December 2016. Marlene attended Huntingdon College. She previously worked at Carr, Riggs and Ingram, Fire Guard Protection Systems, Legislative Reference Service, and Auburn University at Montgomery where she was an adjunct professor in the Communications Department. Marlene served as the Communications Director and Senior Manager of Central Alabama Home Health. Marlene was CEO and President of Dispatch Publishers, a publishing company and advertising agency producing the weekly newspaper, *Maxwell-Gunter Dispatch* and the monthly national newspaper, *Civil Air Patrol News*. Marlene volunteered at Montgomery's American Cancer Society, Sunshine Center, and served as the publicity chairman for the Montgomery Civic Ballet. She also served as the charter president of the Maxwell Air Force Base Kiwanis Club. Marlene was appointed to the Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition in January 2016 and currently serves as chair of the Coalition.

GOOD'S 2019 Legislative Session Bill Signing with Governor Kay Ivey



Governor Kay Ivey Signs into Law 7/24/19

The Volunteer Transportation Bill - Act No. 2019-450

Supported by the Governor's Office on Disability

Attendees at the bill signing pictured left to right:

Marlene Word, Deputy Director, Governor's Office on Disability
Carolyn Bern, Community Affairs Director, Field Operations, Alabama Department of Public Health
Representative K.L. Brown, House of Representatives and bill sponsor
John Zeigler, Executive Director, Alabama State Nurses Association
Cynthia Henderson, Advanced Clinical Nurse, Children's Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama State Nurses Association
Matt Holdbrooks, President and CEO of Kid One Transport
Russ Davis, PhD, Professor at University of West Alabama in Livingston, Alabama. Rural Health Association Board of Directors

GOOD Overview

The Governor's Office on Disability was created by Executive Order Number 43 in 1999. It was formed to serve as a statewide clearing house for information on disability and resources in Alabama. Its other major function is to act as a liaison to the Governor's Office on disability issues.

The Governor's Office on Disability's mission statement was revised in 2008 as follows:

“Facilitate the inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in education, employment, housing, transportation, healthcare, and leisure.”

Executive Order 15 in 2011 re-established the Governor's Office on Disability under the new administration. Because resources are scarce in Alabama, the Governor's Office on Disability seeks to maximize disability resources by identifying existing ones and fostering collaboration among public and private entities that serve people with disabilities.

The Governor's Office on Disability actively seeks to engage communication between individuals with disabilities and their families and entities that provide services to them. GOOD's website, www.good.alabama.gov, is one tool that is being expanded to facilitate open dialogue and access on disability resources and issues. To foster communication even more, GOOD developed a list serve. Anyone interested in issues affecting people with disabilities can join the GOOD list by accessing the website at www.good.alabama.gov, clicking the “Join the GOOD List” icon and entering in personal contact and email information. Periodically, cutting edge information on disability will be shared with list members.

Strategic Plan

(1) Legislation Initiative

Monitor Alabama's disability related legislation and policies and provide policy analysis to the Governor.

Objective 1: Monitor constituent issues with regard to policy formulation and recommendations for legislation.

Objective 2: Serve as a liaison to the Governor on all necessary matters of interest related to the GOOD mission.

(2) Collaboration Initiative

Establish a united voice to determine and meet the needs of the GOOD mission.

Objective 1: Utilize local advisory committees to determine the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities.

Objective 2: Partner with public and private entities, inclusive of state agencies, that advance the achievement of the GOOD mission.

Objective 3: To accept and resolve referrals regarding disability issues from the Governor's Constituent Affairs Office and other referral resources.

(3) Consultation Initiative

Serve as advisor on public disability-related issues in Alabama.

Objective 1: Provide informal legal opinions on disability issues to the Governor's Legal Office.

Objective 2: Provide analytical information to the Governor's Legal Office relative to the GOOD mission.

Objective 3: Act as an expert resource regarding the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws.

(4) Dissemination Initiative

Promote public awareness of actions and activities in fulfilling GOOD's mission.

Objective 1: Increase effective utilization of available resources for Alabamians with disabilities.

Objective 2: Establish a website as the primary dissemination method of GOOD actions, activities and publications.

Objective 3: Promote local and/or statewide media coverage of GOOD's actions and activities when possible.

GOOD Stewards

The Governor's Office on Disability understands the need for accountability and being good stewards of our State's funds. Along with this important commitment, we are also committed to being compassionate, responsive, and caring to each caller or consumer we encounter. While we do track the number of calls we receive, we strive to make the caller feel as if they are 'more than just a number.'

The following are just a few of the many changes made beginning in 2014 and continued in the years that followed:

- Collaborate with other agencies and companies providing resources for people with disabilities
- Partner with other agencies and entities sponsoring disability employment fairs, summits, and advocacy events

A GOOD Experience

While we do track the number of calls we receive, we strive to make the caller feel as if they are 'more than just a number.'

FY 2019 Budget

Personnel Costs	\$52,321
Employee Benefits	\$22,421
Travel-in-State	\$879
Travel Out-of-State	0
Repairs & Maintenance	\$1,110
Rentals & Leases	0
Utilities & Communications	\$232
Professional Services	\$1,234
Supplies, Materials & Operating Expenses	\$1,228
Grants & Benefits	\$17,905
Other Equipment Purchases	0
Total	\$97,330

FY 2019 Smart Budget

Number of Inquiries

Projected	1100
Actual	999

Number responded to within 72 hours

Projected	100%
Actual	100%

Governor's Office on Disability

Goals and Accomplishments for FY 2019

I. Disability Recognition, Summits, Conferences, and Job Fairs

- The Second Annual Governor's Employment Job Fair for People with Disabilities, October 25, 2018, in Huntsville.
- Alabama disABILITY Conference, September 9th through 11th, in Birmingham. Dr. Graham Sisson presented 'Cutting Edge Knowledge for Every Type of Advocate to Unite and Achieve Greater Inclusion.'

II. Convening Disability Consumer Advisory Councils

- 9 Regional Council Meetings during each fiscal year

III. Trainings/Disability Awareness

ADA

- In collaboration with the Alabama's ADA toll free information services conducted FY 2019
 - ◊ 32 ADA Trainings
 - ◊ 13 Accessibility Reviews/Consultations

IV. Information and Referral

- Number of inquiries on disability issues FY 2019
 - ◊ 999 inquiries

V. Website

- Continuously updating website, resources, and corresponding with members on the GOOD List

VI. Legislation Initiative

- GOOD continued to work on legislation to address unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities. The Volunteer Transportation legislation was carried over from the 2018 Legislative Session and passed in the 2019 Legislative Session. **Governor Kay Ivey signed into law the Volunteer Transportation Bill - Act No. 2019-450** on 7/24/19.

VII. FAND—Functional and Access Needs in Disasters Task Force

GOOD took a leadership role in this statewide taskforce in 2013 and continued through 2019. Originally named the Special Populations Taskforce, it was renamed Functional and Access Needs in Disaster to accurately reflect its purpose of ensuring Alabamians with functional and accessible needs are not only considered, but included in all phases of emergency management.

Dr. Sisson co-chairs this group along with Gretchen Richards, Ph.D. from Jacksonville State University. Dr. Sisson continues to serve as liaison between FAND and the Governor's Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce. Those interested in joining this effort should contact Dr. Sisson at 800-441-7607 extension 7189.

Governor's Office on Disability
Goals and Accomplishments for FY 2019

VIII. Partnerships

Amarex Corporation	Blind Advisory Committee
Alabama Association of Regional Councils Conference	Brewton Career Center
Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities	Calhoun Community College
Alabama Community College Association	Camp ASCCA
Alabama Counseling Association	Camp McDowell, Jasper
Alabama Department of Corrections	Central Alabama Community College
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources	Cheaha State Park
Alabama Department of Public Health	Child Care Resources, Inc.
Alabama Department of Human Resources	City of Auburn
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services	City of Gulf Shores
Alabama Disability Advocacy Program	Dallas County EMA
Alabama Easter Seals	Deaf/Blind Coalition
Alabama Emergency Management Agency	Demopolis Career Center
Alabama Fire College Medical Needs Shelter	Dothan Career Center
Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund	DSPN Advisory Board, Huntingdon College
Alabama Governor's Office	Disabilities Rights & Resources
Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum	Family Voices of Alabama
Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council	Foley Career Center
Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind	Governor's Preparedness Conference
Alabama Legislature	Governor's Summit on Disability Employment
Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition	Guntersville State Park
Alabama Multiagency Feeding Plan	Gulf State Park
Alabama Statewide Assistive Technology Advisory Council	Home Medical Equipment Licensure Board
Alabama State Interagency Transition Team	Huntsville Career Center
Alabama State University	Is Able Center
Alabama Transit Coalition	Jacksonville State University
Alabaster Career Centers	Jefferson County Personnel Board
Anniston Career Center	Jefferson County Workforce Development
Auburn University	Joe Wheeler State Park
Birmingham Career Center	Lakeshore Foundation
Birmingham Committee on ADA	Lee County Board of Education

Governor's Office on Disability

Goals and Accomplishments for FY 2019

VIII. Partnerships (Continued)

Long-term Care Rebalancing Committee (Medicaid Agency)	Sheffield Towne Plaza
Limestone County DHR	Shelton State Community College
Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce	Southeast ADA Network Training Team
Maxwell Air Force Base	Sparks Clinic
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant	Special Education Advisory Panel
Mobile Army Corp of Engineers	State of Alabama Independent Living Council
Mobile Center for Independent Living	State Rehabilitation Council
Montevallo University	Trenholm State
Montgomery Career Center	Troy University, Montgomery and Troy Campuses
Montgomery Center for Independent Living	Tuskegee Blind Veterans Group
Montgomery Library for the Blind Advisory Committee	Tuscaloosa Career Center
National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils	UAB Birmingham
North Alabama Fair Housing Center	UAB/Civitan-Sparks Consumer Advisory Council
Oakville Indian Mounds	United Ability
OASIS Advisory Council	United Way of Birmingham
People First	University of South Alabama
Phenix City Career Center	Valley Career Center
Roanoke Career Center	

UNA Establishes Dr. Graham Sisson DSS Champion Award



At the University of North Alabama Awards GALA on 4/23/19, Jeremy Martin, UNA Disability Support Services Director, presented Dr. Graham Sisson with an award in recognition of the establishment of UNA's "Dr. Graham Sisson DSS Champion Award."

Sisson, a 1987 graduate of UNA, said it is a privilege to be remembered by the institution where his college education began.

"I am honored to be recognized," he said. "Certainly, we like to encourage advocacy by other people. Having an award named after me to recognize people that champion the rights of others with disabilities is a very high honor."



It's All GOOD

Join The GOOD List

www.good.alabama.gov

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